

House Republican Press Release

June 8, 2005
Press Office: 860-240-8700

Rep. Boucher Worked to Defeat Marijuana Bill



State Rep. Toni Boucher, R-143rd, Wilton, Norwalk, announced that the Connecticut legislative session adjourned at midnight last night, as a three-year campaign failed to legalize the possession, use and growing of marijuana for medical purposes.

The Connecticut legislation, SB 124, died in the state House of Representatives without coming to a vote. The state Senate had adopted the measure in the early morning hours of June 5 in a 19-15 vote.

Rep. Boucher said the bill would have done more harm than good to sick people and would have sent a false message to impressionable teenagers that marijuana is good for you in certain medical situations.

“Research shows and all credible healthcare organizations say that smoking a marijuana cigarette or smoking any other drug is not safe or effective medicine,” said Rep. Boucher. “Marijuana cigarettes are not a safe and efficacious medicine. Passing this bill as it was currently written would have broken a trust with our constituents of doing no harm and of helping them improve their lives.”

Rep. Boucher added, “A smoke filled lung from whatever the source, tobacco, pollution or a smoked drug, should be avoided. We should be working for the promotion of policies that promote the health and safety of our constituents--not harming them.”

“Consider the research from Yale, Harvard and our own Connecticut Medical Society,” said Rep. Boucher. “Smoked marijuana damages the brain, heart, lungs, and immune system. It impairs learning and interferes with memory, perception, and judgment. Smoked marijuana contains cancer-causing compounds and have also been implicated in a high percentage of automobile crashes and workplace accidents.

She added, “Marijuana now surpasses heroin and cocaine as a reason for an emergency room visit. As responsible public officials we can not ignore these facts.”

Rep. Boucher noted that a marijuana cigarette is four times as potent as one tobacco cigarette and that it produces the same medical dangers, such as tumors, respiratory and heart ailments as well as a suppressed immune system.

“Puff for puff, the marijuana cigarette is four times more dangerous to the health of the smoker than a tobacco cigarette,” said Rep. Boucher. “Yet, many of the same people who want to clamp down on cigarette use are advocating marijuana use. It makes no sense.”

Rep. Boucher also noted that a medical marijuana program in Hawaii has been declared dead after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled June 6 that state laws don't protect medical users, dealers, or doctors from federal drug prosecution.

Rep. Boucher highlighted seven major arguments against legalizing marijuana for medical use:

1. This bill harms the critically ill much more than it helps. It hurts more than it helps those in pain
2. There are safe and effective alternatives, new ones about to come to the market.
3. Allowing a person to grow 4 plants to 4 feet high cannot be enforced nor can it prevent widespread abuse.
4. This bill is illegal, against federal law and the Rell administration has said that it is enforcing federal law. States that have moved in this direction are now in further jeopardy as the June 6 Supreme Court decision supported the federal government right to prosecute growers and users in medical marijuana states.
5. The State of Connecticut, Connecticut doctors and healthcare centers and businesses open themselves up to massive law suits
6. There would be increased costs to state substance treatment programs and public safety as well as our state monitoring agencies
7. We are harming our children by sending them the wrong message that drugs are OK, at a time that we are experiencing serious drug problems in our communities and schools. We undermine our current anti-drug efforts and substance treatment programs by contradicting our strong anti-drug efforts.

Rep. Boucher concluded, “Of the seven reasons why we should not take Connecticut down this dangerous path, the most serious and most compelling reason, legal issues notwithstanding, is that smoking marijuana is not safe or effective medicine, that we will be harming the desperately sick who are fighting to stay alive. We should instead be giving them the very best prospects for recovery, not undermining them.

“Marijuana like tobacco is not a new drug; it has been around a very long time. What is new is that there are now scientific studies on this subject. Just as it took scientists time to document the harm of tobacco, it has taken time to investigate this increasingly stronger and modified plant.”

“In recent medical studies, smoked marijuana has been shown to cause very serious health problems, including cancer, respiratory and breathing problems, loss of motor skills, and increased heart rate associated with sudden death syndrome.

“Marijuana can affect the immune system by impairing the ability of T-cells to fight off infections, demonstrating that marijuana can do more harm than good in people with already compromised immune systems.”

“With greater use and abuse of this drug, we are now seeing the damage to health that smoking marijuana can produce. Smoked marijuana is associated with higher concentrations of tar, carbon monoxide, and carcinogens than even cigarette smoke. There is now conclusive evidence that smoking marijuana gives you greater exposure to cancerous chemicals than from tobacco.”

“In fact, one marijuana cigarette can deliver four times as much cancer-causing tar as one tobacco cigarette. Why is this?

Although cannabis cigarettes are smoked less frequently than nicotine cigarettes, their mode of inhalation is very different. Compared with smoking tobacco, smoking cannabis entails a two thirds larger puff volume, a one third larger inhaled volume, a fourfold longer time holding the breath, and a fivefold increase in concentrations of carboxyhaemoglobin. The products of combustion from smoked marijuana are thus retained to a much higher degree. In addition, it stays in the blood stream for nearly 30 days and has been detected in those exposed to its second hand smoke in drug tests.

“This is one of the main reasons that no FDA-approved medication is smoked. Smoking is a poor way to deliver medicine of any kind. It is also impossible to administer safe, regulated dosages of medicines in smoked form.”

“That is why the organizations that advocate on behalf of the very illnesses mentioned in SB 124 such as The American Medical Society, our own Connecticut Medical Society who testified against this bill in committee this year, the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, the American Glaucoma Society, the American Academy of Ophthalmology, the American Cancer Society, the American Society of Addiction Medicine, the American Academy of Family Physicians and American Academy of Pediatrics all reject crude marijuana as medicine. There is no pharmacological or medical justification for the use of leaf marijuana in the treatment of specific ailments.”

Rep. Boucher serves the 143rd Assembly District of Wilton and Norwalk in the state House of Representatives.